

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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POUCHED INFO ALL CANADIAN CONGENS

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SUBJ: TRUDEAU ECONOMIC COMMENTARY CAUSES CONTINUED REACTION

REF: (A) HALIFAX 009; (B) HALIFAX 006; REF (C) OTTAWA 4828

1. SUMMARY. PUBLIC REACTION TO TRUDEAU DISCOURSE ON THE CANADIAN ECONOMIC FUTURE CONTINUES AND PERHAPS EVEN GROWS. MOST PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARE HOSTILE AND PARTISAN. SAME ADVERSE COMMENT, HOWEVER, FROM LIBERALS. EMBASSY VIEW IS THAT IT IS PREMATURE TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS. END SUMMARY.

2. REACTION TO TRUDEAU COMMENTARY ON CANADIAN ECONOMIC FUTURE (REF C) CONTINUES HOT AND HEAVY AND INDEED SEEMS TO HAVE GROWN AS POLITICIANS AND MEDIA COMMENTATORS HAVE HAD TIME FOR SOME REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS.

3. A GOOD PART OF REACTION HAS COME FROM PREDICTABLE SOURCES AND WITH EQUALLY PREDICTABLE HOSTILITY TO TRUDEAU THESIS. CANDIDATES FOR LEADERSHIP OF PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (PC) HAVE JUMPED ON TRUDEAU, "RUSHING TO THE RIGHT, TRIPPING

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OVER ONE ANOTHER IN THEIR EAGERNESS TO BRAND THE PRIME MINISTER

AS A SOCIALIST," IN WORDS OF TORONTO GLOBE AND MAIL COMMENTATOR GEOFFREY STEVENS. TOME COSSITT, PC MEMBER FROM LEEDS AND A RABID TRUDEAU-HATER, ANNOUNCED JANUARY 6 THAT HE HAD LEARNED OF A LIBERAL PARTY DISSIDENT GROUP WHICH WAS HOLDING SECRET MEETINGS TO DISCUSS REACTIONS TO TRUDEAU'S FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP. COSSITT CLAIMED GROUP CONSISTED OF ABOUT HALF DOZEN LIBERAL MP'S INCLUDING ONE CABINET MINISTER AND THAT TRUDEAU'S RECENT ECONOMIC STATEMENT MERELY PROVIDED IMPETUS FOR EARLIER DISSATISFACTION. HE DID NOT GIVE NAMES. RAY PERRAULT, GOVERNMENT LEADER IN THE SENATE, RESPONDED IN KIND, CALLING THE COSSITT CHARGES "FALSE" AND COSSITT HIMSELF A "POLITICAL CRACKPOT."

4. PC LEADERSHIP CANDIDATE SINCLAIR STEVENS, MP FROM YORK-SIMCOE, PROVIDED A TWIST TO PC OUTBURST. SUGGESTING THAT FORMER LIBERAL FINANCE MINISTER JOHN TURNER MIGHT BE LEADER OF CONSERVATIVE CONTINGENT WITHIN LIBERAL PARTY, STEVENS CALLED UPON TURNER TO DECLARE HIMSELF AND LEAD HIS GROUP OF LIBERAL DISSIDENTS ACROSS THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE (I.E. INTO OPPOSITION).

5. SAME ADVERSE REACTION HAS, HOWEVER, COME FROM LIBERALS OR OSTENSIBLY NON-PARTISAN SOURCES. NOVA SCOTIA LIBERAL PREMIER REGAN'S OBJECTIONS TO PERMANENT CONTROLS NOTED IN REF A AND BLAST FROM NOVA SCOTIAN LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR CLARENCE GROSSE REPORTED REF B. LIBERAL MP HERB GRAY (WINDSON WEST) JANUARY 6 REPORTEDLY CALLED FOR TRUDEAU TO CONVENE LIBERAL PARTY CAUCUS TO EXPLAIN HIS REMARKS, WHICH, GRAY CLAIMED, PROBABLY CAUSED UNEASE WITHIN LIBERAL RANKS. FYI. GRAY COMMENTS MUST BE DISCOUNTED SOMEWHAT BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN LESS THAN 100 PERCENT SUPPORTER OF LIBERAL GOVERNMENT SINCE HE WAS DROPPED FROM CABINET IN 1974. END FYI. FINALLY, A SMATTERING OF LOCAL LIBERAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE TORONTO AND OTTAWA AREAS HAVE PUBLICLY DISASSOCIATED THEMSELVES FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS.

6. COMMENT. PUBLIC REACTION TO TRUDEAU'S COMMENTS ON CANADA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE DIFFICULT AT THIS POINT FOR EMBASSY TO ASSESS. CERTAINLY THE MAJORITY OF REACTIONS CARRIED IN THE MEDIA HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF TRUDEAU VIEWS. BUT MUCH OF THIS IN PATENTLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PARTISAN AND CRITICISM, IN ANY CASE, MORE LIKELY TO RECEIVE QUICK MEDIA ATTENTION. GEOFFREY STEVENS, IN JANUARY 7 GLOBE AND MAIL, MAKES POINT THAT LIBERALS HAVE HAD CONTINUING ELECTORAL SUCCESS BY KEEPING PC'S TO THE RIGHT AND THAT TRUDEAU REMARKS AND PC REACTION LOOKS LIKE MORE OF THE SAME. AS HE PUTS IT, "THE PRIME MINISTER IS TALKING ABOUT THE CANADA OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY. THE CONSERVATIVES SEEM INTENT ON REVIVING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY." WORTH NOTING ALSO THAT

STEVENS IS NO FRIEND OF TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT.

IN ANY CASE, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT PREMATURE TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS. THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE MANY MAKING LOUDEST PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVEN'T READ ALL OF WHAT TRUDEAU SAID. JANUARY 8 GLOBE AND MAIL EDITORIAL, FOR EXAMPLE, SUGGESTS THAT ONE READ WHAT HE SAID BEFORE DRAWING CONCLUSIONS. AS TEXT IS READ BY MORE, REACTION COULD CHANGE. MOST IMPORTANT, THERE IS NOT YET A MEASURE OF HOW TRUDEAU STATEMENTS, REAL OR PERCEIVED, HAVE REGISTERED WITH THE MAN IN THE STREET, AND THIS IS AFTER ALL, WHAT REALLY COUNTS.

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